

Preventing Substance Use Starts at Home

Safeguarding Your Children



When it comes to drugs and alcohol, many parents worry about influences from the outside world, like the media and their children's friends. But what can be found *inside* your home is just as important — youth say that the family home can be a major source of substances like prescription drugs, alcohol, and inhalants.

Take a tour of your home >>>>>

Take steps to protect your children:

- **Learn** about risky substances, and how to safeguard your children.
- **Go through** your home and identify substances that might be misused.
- **Replace** or remove risky products when possible.
- **Put** risky substances in secure places and supervise your children if they have to use them.
- **Watch** your children for possible signs of misuse. Talk about your concerns, and get help if needed (see the last page for more information).



Inhalants

Inhalant misuse is the breathing or sniffing of gases or vapors on purpose to change one's mood or behavior. It is illegal to use them in this way. Over 1,000 common household products can be used as inhalants. Examples include gases, fuels, products that contain solvents, or anything in an aerosol can (like air freshener or whipped cream).

Computer gas dusters, used to clean computers and keyboards, are especially dangerous inhalants.

Know the facts:

- Inhalants are often the *first* substance children try. Children in elementary school have been found using them.
- Inhalants used in this way can cause death, even the first time. Inhalants can also cause brain damage, addiction, and problems with judgment and long-term memory.



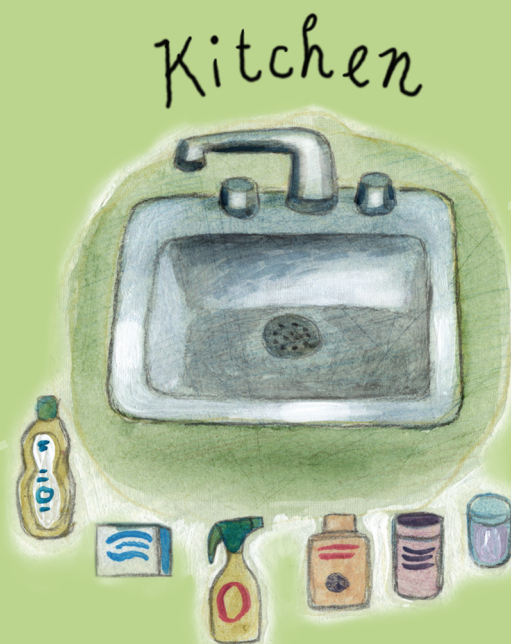
Help protect your children:

- When possible, replace items that could be used as inhalants with water-based or non-aerosol products, such as pump sprays (see resources at the end of this booklet).
- Keep items that could be used as inhalants in a secure place and watch children if they have to use them.
- Model safe use of these products for your children by following product directions. Explaining the directions can also be helpful.
- Throw away products you don't use. Find out from your city or town how to safely throw away hazardous products.
- Teach your children to protect their bodies by not putting anything into them unless it was given to them by a trusted adult. Don't mention to your children that inhalants can be used to get "high."

Don't tell children exactly what products can be used as inhalants.

Watch for:

- Chemical smells on breath or clothing
- Paint or other stains on face, hands, or clothes
- Hidden empty aerosol cans or solvent containers (such as paint thinner or nail polish remover)
- Items used for inhaling products, such as plastic or paper bags, rags, or balloons
- Disoriented behavior
- Attention or coordination problems
- Changes in social behavior or school performance



Prescription Drugs

Prescription drugs (drugs given by a doctor) can be safe and helpful when used correctly, but many prescription drugs can also be *misused*. Youth sometimes get prescription drugs from their own homes, peers, and the Internet. Keep only the prescriptions you are currently using.

The most commonly misused prescription drugs include:

- **Pain medications** such as Vicodin[®], OxyContin[®], Percocet[®], and codeine — prescribed for people with serious, long-term pain, and sometimes to treat short-term pain
- **Stimulants** such as Ritalin[®], Concerta[®], Adderall[®], Dexedrine[®], and Meridia[®] — used to treat ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or other disorders
- **Sedatives and tranquilizers** such as Valium[®], Xanax[®], Ativan[®], Klonopin[®], Ambien[®], Lunesta[®], and barbiturates — prescribed to treat stress and anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia, and seizures

Tips for monitoring your children's use of prescription medications

If your children are prescribed medications:

- Keep control of the medication bottle and supervise your children when they are taking medication. Count the pills regularly.
- Keep the medication securely at home if possible. If your children need to take medication during the school day, this must be worked out with the school nurse, and certain conditions must be met according to state regulations. If this is necessary, talk with the school nurse. You can also ask your child's doctor about the best schedule for giving the medication.
- Remind your children that their prescription medications are only good for them — and could seriously hurt other children.





Know the tips on how to talk to your children:

- Let your children know you are open to discussing any substance issues.
- Clearly state that they cannot use any medications unless they were prescribed or recommended for them.
- Make it clear to your children that the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs can be just as harmful as some street drugs.
- Remind them that taking another person's prescription or sharing their prescriptions with someone else is illegal.
- Explain that you will hold onto their pill bottles and oversee their doses and refills.

Prescription drug misuse can cause addiction, increased blood pressure and heart rate, seizures, organ damage, and even death.

Watch for:

- Medications your children have for reasons they can't explain, such as cough or cold medications, prescription drugs, or unidentifiable pills
- Missing medications
- Visits to websites where your children can order or learn about using drugs
- Changes in social behavior

Non-prescription danger: cough medicine

An ingredient found in many cough medicines — dextromethorphan (DXM) — can also be misused.

Misuse of cough medicine can cause serious health problems including increased heart rate, high blood pressure, seizures, dizziness, and coma. Any product name with "DM" or "tuss" in it contains DXM. You can also look for dextromethorphan in the ingredient list.

Help protect your children:

Store all medications in a place where children can't easily get them or aren't likely to look. Locked boxes are the safest.

Throw away unused or expired drugs. There are a few ways to do this:

Option 1: Flush them down the toilet.

The information sheet that came with your medication may tell you to flush it down the drain when you are finished using it or it has expired. For instance, these drugs should be flushed away because they are dangerous for other people and pets:

- Actiq (fentanyl citrate)
- Daytrana Transdermal Patch (methylphenidate)
- Duragesic Transdermal System (fentanyl)
- OxyContin Tablets (oxycodone)
- Avinza Capsules (morphine sulfate)
- Baraclude Tablets (entecavir)
- Reyataz Capsules (atazanavir sulfate)
- Tequin Tablets (gatifloxacin)
- Zerit for Oral Solution (stavudine)
- Meperidine HCl Tablets
- Percocet (oxycodone and acetaminophen)
- Xyrem (sodium oxybate)
- Fentora (fentanyl buccal tablet)

Option 2: Go to a drop box.

Check www.mass.gov/DrugDropbox to see if there is a waste medication collection site in your town or city. Many police stations have drop boxes. Your community or local pharmacy may also have a prescription take-back program.

Storage Area



Option 3: Throw them away in the trash.

To do this you will first need to:

- Keep medications in their original containers.
- Leave drug names visible to help identify the contents if they are accidentally swallowed.
- Cross out other personal information on labels so it cannot be read.

Next, disguise the medications in their containers:

- For pills: add some water or soda to dissolve them.
- For liquids: add material that cannot be eaten, like cat litter, coffee grounds, or dirt.

Finally, close the lids and secure the container with tape. Hide the medication containers in the trash. DO NOT put them in your recycle bin.

Show your children how you want them to act by what you do and say about prescription drugs. By doing this, you are modeling healthy behavior for your children.

Alcohol

Alcohol, which is commonly found in family households and is legal when used by people over 21, is the *most commonly misused substance by teens*.

Know the facts:

- Some young people try alcohol in their homes without their parents knowing.
- Young people's brains continue maturing in their teen years and early twenties. Alcohol can interfere with this development.

Alcohol use can cause serious health problems for teens, and it is also linked to risky behaviors, like sexual activity and violence. Other risks include long-term learning and memory problems, poor judgment, addiction, car crashes, injuries, and death.

Help protect your children:

- Put all alcohol in a secure place that is out of children's reach.
- Monitor the levels in liquor bottles and watch for alcohol that has been watered down.
- Don't store extra alcohol in places like the basement or garage — it's easy for bottles or cans to disappear.
- If you drink, model healthy alcohol use to your children.
- Don't allow teen drinking. Don't host parties or allow your children to go to parties where alcohol is served to those under 21. Make your rules and expectations clear to your children and make sure they follow the rules.

Watch for:

- Bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, poor coordination
- Alcohol in your child's bedroom or backpack
- Bottles with unknown liquids inside
- Smell of alcohol on the breath
- Changes in social behavior



Find out more from Commonwealth of Massachusetts and U.S. sources

All substances:

- **“Preparing Your Young Children for a Healthy, Drug-free Future;” “Talking to Your Middle School-Aged Child about Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs;” “7 Ways to Protect Your Teen from Alcohol and Other Drugs;” and “Strengthening Families Program”** (DVD) are available at:
www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse
Toll-free: 1-800-952-6637
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370

Inhalants:

- **20-minute online training for parents** with information about inhalant misuse, product and safety tips, and how to teach children of different ages about inhalants:
www.inhalantabusetraining.org (for adults only)
- **“A Parent’s Guide: Preventing Inhalant Abuse Among Children and Teens,”** including a list of safer products, is available at:
www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse
Toll-free: 1-800-952-6637
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370

Talk with your children about drugs and alcohol, monitor their activities, and set rules and consequences. (See resources on the back page.) Youth whose parents talk to them regularly about drugs are less likely to use them. When your children are doing well, tell them. It means a lot coming from you, and can have a big impact on their choices.

Prescription drugs:

- **Prescription drug information and publications:**
www.nida.nih.gov/DrugPages/prescription.html
- **“Their Future Depends on You — Together We Can Prevent Prescription Drug Abuse”** is available at: www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse
Toll-free: 1-800-952-6637
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370
- **Prescription and non-prescription medication information**, including generic names:
www.medlineplus.gov

Alcohol:

- **“Preventing Underage Drinking . . . Priceless”** is available at: www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse
Toll-free: 1-800-952-6637
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370
- **Tips for parents** and other adults who work with children: www.stopalcoholabuse.gov



More guides and services

Mass 2-1-1:

Information and referrals for youth (including recreational programs) and family services:
Toll-free 2-1-1 or 1-877-211-6277 (multi-lingual)
TTY: 1-508-370-4890
www.mass211help.org

Youth Central Intake Care Coordination:

Information for youth and their families affected by alcohol or other drugs and referrals to services:
Toll-free: 1-866-705-2807
TTY: 1-617-661-9051
www.healthrecovery.org/projects/youth-cicc/

Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline:

Confidential information, prevention, and treatment referrals:
Toll-free: 1-800-327-5050
(seven days a week, multi-lingual)
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370
www.helpline-online.com

Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse:

Free copies of publications on how to talk with children about alcohol and other drugs (including **“Preventing Substance Use Starts at Home”**) and other health topics:
Toll-free: 1-800-952-6637
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370
www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse

Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention serving MA and RI:

Information and hotline about inhalants and other poisons:
Toll-free: 1-800-222-1222 (24 hours)
TTY: 1-888-244-5313
www.maripoisoncenter.com

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services:

Information, downloadable parent and youth publications, and statistics:
www.mass.gov/dph/bsas or www.mass.gov/parentpower

Selected information sources for this brochure include: MA Department of Public Health and MA Department of Education, “Massachusetts Youth Health Survey;” National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: www.niaaa.nih.gov; The Anti-Drug: www.theantidrug.com.

